

The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

13 June 1984

The Honorable Evan G. Galbraith  
American Ambassador  
Paris, France

Dear Van:

[REDACTED] I was delighted to learn during our brief conversation that you will in fact play a foreign-policy role during the upcoming campaign. Several of us here in Washington have been doing some thinking about how the Soviets might try to un-horse the President. What follows is a brief synthesis of our thoughts:

1. When we accumulate a range of possibilities, we may find that they fit into three distinct categories:

-- Soviet actions to raise tensions. In this category we would include all seemingly random incidents--the shoot-down of an airliner, the burning of an embassy, the taking of US hostages, the surfacing of a Soviet sub underneath a US aircraft carrier, something or other in Berlin--that together will serve to generate fear and even alarm in the US. A steady barrage of propaganda would raise the decibel level of background noise, which in turn would be amplified by elements of the US media.

-- Soviet actions to raise the specter of a nuclear confrontation. In this category we would include such developments as the introduction of nuclear weapons to Cuba and/or the Caribbean, or the overt nuclear targeting of US allies such as the Philippines.

-- Soviet actions designed to force the commitment of US troops prior to November, under circumstances the American public would not easily comprehend or support. In this category we would include a Communist offensive designed to bring about the collapse of a vulnerable but politically unpopular US ally, such as El Salvador, the Philippines, Jordan, a Persian Gulf regime, or Pakistan.

2. The possibility of Soviet or Soviet-inspired trouble-making needs to be anticipated publicly, which in turn would deflate its impact. What would be most damaging during the coming months would be an air of crisis, accompanied by pictures of grim-looking US leaders interrupting schedules to meet at odd hours. By publicly anticipating this sort of thing, when

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the Soviets do act we are in a position to say: Well, as you know we've been expecting something like this. We'll deal with it, of course. But there's no reason for alarm at all. Indeed, it just shows we're on the right track.

In essence the point that needs to be made is this: The US has begun to stand up for its own interests and to defend itself prudently. We never expected the Soviets to like it, and they don't. They're the sort of people who would lash out in an effort to scare us off course, and we should be prepared for some nastiness. We are prepared, and should the Soviets in fact lash out we will deal with them prudently but firmly.

3. Senior US officials need to recognize--now--that the sorts of Soviet actions we are talking about, if they come, would be designed explicitly to destroy the Reagan-Bush Administration. Since the Soviet action would have an objective that is more political than strategic, so too must our response be more political than strategic. There will be no time to think this through once trouble strikes. Moreover, our national security machinery does not think this way, and therefore will generate a series of options not suited to countering the Soviet objective. Thus the need for a recognition--now--that the sort of trouble we are anticipating will need to be dealt with a bit differently, so that the options for response are designed explicitly to block the Soviet objective.

I welcome your reactions to all this, and look forward to seeing you here in Washington later this summer.

All best.

Sincerely,



Herbert E. Meyer  
Vice Chairman